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COMMONWEALTH YOUTH MINISTERS MEETING, HELD AT KUALA LUMPUR FROM 28 TO 30 MAY 1998

Note by the Secretariat

The Conference secretariat has the honour to circulate to Conference partipants, as received and in the language of submission only, the attached conclusions and recommendations of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, which was held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 28 to 30 June 1998.

COMMONWEALTH

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98/35

2 June 1998

Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 28-30 May 1998

Conclusions and Recommendations

Commonwealth Youth Ministers met in Kuala Lumpur on 28-30 May 1998. Forty-four countries, of which 36 were represented by Ministers, participated in the Meeting. Representatives of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the CHOGM Committee on Co-operation through Sport (CCCS), Commonwealth Foundation, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Youth Unit, and the Portuguese Government participated as observers. The Hon Tan Sri Dato' Haji Muhyiddin bin Haji Mohd Yassin, Minister of Youth and Sports of Malaysia chaired the Meeting.

2. Ministers welcomed the occasion of their Meeting as providing an opportunity for a valuable exchange of national experiences in the development of young people. They reviewed the implementation of the work programme agreed by them at their last meeting in Port of Spain in 1995, discussed a work plan for the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) to the year 2000, and considered the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment. The following are their conclusions and recommendations.

Plan of Work to the Year 2000

3. Ministers commended the achievements of the Commonwealth Youth Programme since 1995 in the three interrelated strategic areas of National Youth Policy Development, Human Resource Development and Youth Empowerment.

They noted that 33 member countries either had or were in the process of formulating, revising and implementing national youth policies, and that many other member countries were planning to develop a national youth policy. They called on the Commonwealth Secretariat to continue to assist member countries in this area. They noted the impressive progress made in the development of a pan-Commonwealth distance education programme for youth-in-development workers, in collaboration with the COL and sixteen other partner institutions in the Commonwealth. They welcomed the launch of a pilot cycle, from which 2,000 participants would initially benefit by the year 2000. They noted with satisfaction the progress achieved in the introduction of the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative (CYCI), and its adoption as a practical model for poverty alleviation among young people. They called on the Secretariat to promote this further through the advocacy of a Microcredit Management System (McMS).

Youth Empowerment

4. Ministers discussed 'Youth Empowerment for the New Millennium' as their special theme. They welcomed the growing opportunities for young people and their achievements in today's world; at the same time they recognised that much potential was yet to be realised. In many countries, young people continued to suffer from inadequate access to education, health facilities and opportunities for productive employment; and from marginalisation, social exclusion and loss of self-esteem. Ministers believed that young people needed to develop their potential fully, enhance their self-esteem, and make a positive contribution to the development of their societies and cultures, involving themselves to the full in the economic, social and political environment in which they lived. Young people themselves were the best resource for promoting their development. Ministers noted the range of activity undertaken by the Commonwealth in promoting youth empowerment since 1995: advocacy of youth rights as human rights, training young people in conflict resolution and prevention skills, and enabling young people to deal with health challenges including HIV/AIDS, sexual reproductive health and drug and substance abuse. They also welcomed the involvement of young people in Commonwealth governance processes. They encouraged the Secretariat to build on these achievements.

5. Ministers welcomed the work undertaken by the Secretariat in combating the sexual exploitation of children and called on Commonwealth countries to strengthen their measures to counter it.

6. Ministers recognised that governments need to play an active role in creating the enabling conditions for the empowerment of young people. In this context, they considered a Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment to the year 2005 prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of consultation across the Commonwealth, which set out four basic principles of youth empowerment as described in paragraph 3.1 of the Plan of Action. This offered a range of policy options from which governments can choose the most appropriate actions for their own countries. They included:

- the development and implementation of measures to promote the participation of young people in the economy;
- measures to strengthen social support systems and collaboration between key stakeholders in youth empowerment;
- the development and strengthening of youth ministries, national youth policies and legislative and/or administrative frameworks impacting on youth affairs;
- the promotion of positive role models and self-images to foster a sense of responsibility and self-esteem in young people;
- the promotion of participation by young people, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances, in decision-making at appropriate levels including communities and local, provincial and national governments;
- affirmative and direct action to ensure gender equity and equality of treatment and outcomes for young people in special circumstances;
- the promotion of a democratic, stable and peaceful environment in which the rights of young people are fully implemented;
- action for the development and maintenance of human resource and intellectual capital;
- measures to improve young people's access to information and communications technology; and
- the encouragement of youth participation in sporting and cultural activities as a means of promoting positive values and advancing human development.

7. Ministers endorsed the policy framework represented by the Plan as a guide for action by Commonwealth governments. They requested the Secretariat to support and complement the efforts of member governments through the provision of advice and technical assistance to governments, and in other ways as identified in the Plan of Action. They called on all the stakeholders - governments, NGOs and other constituents of civil society, the private sector, intergovernmental organisations, educational and other institutions and young women and men - to collaborate in youth empowerment. They called on the Secretariat to monitor and evaluate, in consultation with member governments and the Youth Caucus, progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action, and report to their next meeting. In this context, they welcomed the proposal by the Secretariat to develop a Youth Development Index using specific performance indicators.

Partnerships for Youth Development

8. Ministers recognised the importance of forging partnerships in preventing the marginalisation and social exclusion of youth in society, and commended the Commonwealth programmes which promoted such partnerships in the fields of education, health, micro-credit and sport. They asked the Secretariat to continue to promote such partnerships, drawing on the rich networks and relationships in the Commonwealth. Ministers called on Commonwealth governments to develop their youth empowerment

policies in such a way as to promote measures to eliminate poverty and marginalisation. The targets for this action should be appropriate and achievable.

9. Ministers welcomed the proposal to establish a Commonwealth Youth Volunteer Scheme to enable young women and men to spend time in each other's country undertaking voluntary work in promoting projects which contribute to social and economic programmes. They requested the Secretary-General to examine all aspects of the proposal including how it might build on other schemes, with an estimation of costs, and bring it to governments for their further consideration.

Resources

10. In commending the continuing great value of the Commonwealth Youth Programme, Ministers called on all member governments to provide the resources necessary to fulfil the programme of work contained in the Strategic Plan for 1998-2000, subject to normal public expenditure limitations. They requested the Secretary-General to explore the scope for enhancing the effectiveness of the programmes through increased efficiency and reductions in overhead costs, and the streamlining of governance and administrative arrangements currently applicable to the programme. They encouraged the Secretariat to develop partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors where appropriate.

Ministerial Review Group

11. Ministers agreed to establish a ministerial group to review the changing environment for the development and empowerment of young people and, in the light of this, identify new strategic priorities for the CYP to enable it to provide effective support to member governments as the Commonwealth enters the new Millennium; and to examine existing resources, including the ratio of programme to administration costs, and the instruments and procedures for the delivery of the programme. The group will comprise Ministers of Youth of The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Britain, Canada, Fiji, Malaysia, New Zealand, Seychelles, South Africa, and a representative of the Youth Caucus. The group will make its recommendations before the next meeting of Commonwealth Youth Ministers.

Commonwealth Games and Sport

12. Ministers recognised the valuable role that sport could play in developing the capacities of young women and men and in the contribution it can make to the promotion of peace and conflict resolution. In this context, they welcomed a report from the CHOGM Committee on Co-operation through Sport (CCCS) and expressed support for its future plans of action, particularly the vital role of sport in enabling young people to develop their full potential. Ministers expressed strong support for the CCCS and recommended that CHOGM

consider the renewal of its mandate in 1999. They also welcomed the proposals by the Secretariat to work with the CCCS in developing methodologies for use by national governments in formulating national sports policies.

13. Ministers welcomed the proposal that a scheme of Commonwealth sports scholarships and bursaries be established to enable sports persons to receive training in countries which have particular expertise in specified areas of sports and games; and to enable experienced Commonwealth sports trainers and coaches to spend time in member countries to train young women and men. They requested the Secretary-General to examine these proposals with due regard to other priorities and bring them to governments for their further consideration.

14. Ministers looked forward to wide participation by member countries in the Commonwealth Games in September 1998 and expressed appreciation to Malaysia, their host.

Commonwealth Youth Forum

15. Ministers welcomed the involvement of young people themselves in the preparation of the Plan of Action and the holding of a Pan-Commonwealth Youth Forum in the week prior to their Meeting. The Youth Caucus reported on behalf of the Pan-Commonwealth Youth Forum, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for young people in the Commonwealth and offering recommendations for ways in which the CYP could tackle these challenges and improve its effectiveness. Ministers encouraged the Secretariat to continue to involve young people at every level.

Commonwealth Youth Service Awards

16. Ministers expressed satisfaction at the successful continuation of the Commonwealth Youth Service Awards scheme, and its extension to regional levels. They believed that it played a valuable role in promoting positive images of young women and men and welcomed the contribution it can make in promoting Commonwealth values of peace, democracy, human rights and equality.

Next Meeting

17. Ministers expressed their warm appreciation to the Government and people of Malaysia for hosting their Meeting. They noted the interest of the South Pacific in hosting their next Meeting in 2000. Governments would be advised of the location in due course.

Commonwealth Secretariat
Kuala Lumpur Hilton
30 May 1998

Message to Commonwealth Heads of Government from the Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Youth Affairs 28-30 May 1998, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

We the Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Youth Affairs affirm our commitment to a world that recognises the importance and the potential of young women and men in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has a young population; in many of our countries those under thirty comprise over sixty per cent of the population. The full participation of young men and women in all aspects of economic, social and political life of our countries is critical both for national development and the future success and prosperity of the Commonwealth.

At our Meeting we discussed 'Youth Empowerment for the New Millennium' as a special theme. We welcomed the growing opportunities for young people and their achievements in today's world; at the same time we recognised that much of their potential is yet to be realised. In many countries young people continue to suffer from inadequate access to education and health facilities, opportunities for productive employment, from marginalisation, social exclusion and loss of self-esteem. We believe that young people need to develop their full potential, enhance their self-esteem and make a positive contribution to the development of their societies and cultures; and involve themselves fully in the economic, social and political environment in which they live; and that young people themselves are the best resource for promoting their development.

We recognise that governments need to play an active role in creating the enabling conditions for the empowerment of young people. In this context, we considered a Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment to the year 2005. The Plan of Action sets out some basic principles of youth empowerment, and offers a range of policy options from which governments can choose the most appropriate actions reflecting conditions in their own countries.

We endorsed the policy framework represented by the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment as a guide for action by governments and other stakeholders, and by the Commonwealth Secretariat. We are requesting the Secretary-General to present the Plan of Action to you in the hope and expectation that it will receive your support.

Commonwealth Secretariat
Kuala Lumpur Hilton
Malaysia
30 May 1998